

Legacy of Service



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Special thank you to our staff for sharing their inspiring photos while serving in the US military. Your dedication and sacrifice shine brightly on the cover of our 2023 annual report and your commitment to service is truly appreciated.

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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



Dear Members of the Orlando VA Healthcare System Community,

I am honored to share with you the highlights and achievements that have defined our journey over the past year. Our commitment to providing exceptional health care and support to our Veterans remains unwavering and I am proud to report on the collective efforts that have shaped our successes. Throughout the year, our dedicated healthcare professionals have demonstrated exceptional resilience and adaptability, ensuring that Veterans receive the highest quality of care, even in the face of unprecedented challenges.

In the realm of medical advancements, the Orlando VA Healthcare System has continued to invest in cutting-edge technologies and research initiatives. This commitment has not only enhanced the care we provide, but has positioned us as a leader in healthcare innovation. Our partnerships with research institutions and collaboration with industry leaders have allowed us to contribute significantly to the advancement of medical knowledge and the improvement of healthcare outcomes for Veterans.

Our focus on mental health and well-being has remained steadfast, recognizing the critical importance of addressing the unique challenges faced by Veterans. Initiatives to expand mental health services, reduce stigma, and increase access to care have been pivotal in ensuring that Veterans receive comprehensive support for both their physical and mental health needs.

Twenty twenty three has also seen remarkable progress in our efforts to enhance patient experience and accessibility. From streamlining appointment processes to leveraging telehealth technologies, we are committed to making healthcare delivery more convenient and responsive to the evolving needs of the Veteran community.

In terms of infrastructure, ongoing facility improvements and expansions have been initiated to better serve our growing population of Veterans. These enhancements are a testament to our dedication to creating a healthcare environment that reflects the high standards of excellence our Veterans deserve.

I extend my deepest gratitude to every member of the Orlando VA Healthcare System community—our staff, partners, and, most importantly, Veterans. Your dedication, compassion, and resilience have defined this fiscal year as a period of remarkable achievement and progress. As we move forward, let us remain united in our mission to honor the service of our Veterans through the delivery of exceptional healthcare.

With my deepest gratitude,

Timothy J. Cooke
Director/CEO
Orlando VA Health Care System



EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP



Timothy J. Cooke
Director / CEO



**Dr. Lisa Zacher, MD,
MACP, FCCP**
Chief of Staff



**Tracy Skala, M.S. EdI,
VHA-CM**
Deputy Medical
Center Director



Suzette McNeil
Associate Director for
Patient Care Services



Dr. Derek Szafranski
Associate Medical
Center Director

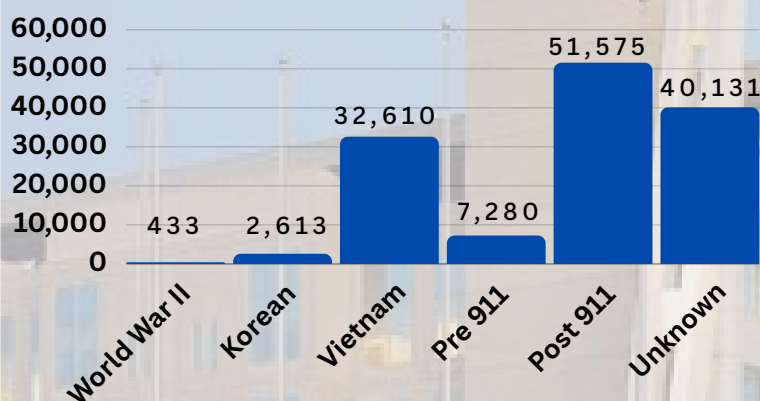


Jeffrey T. Birdsong, MBA
Acting Assistant Director

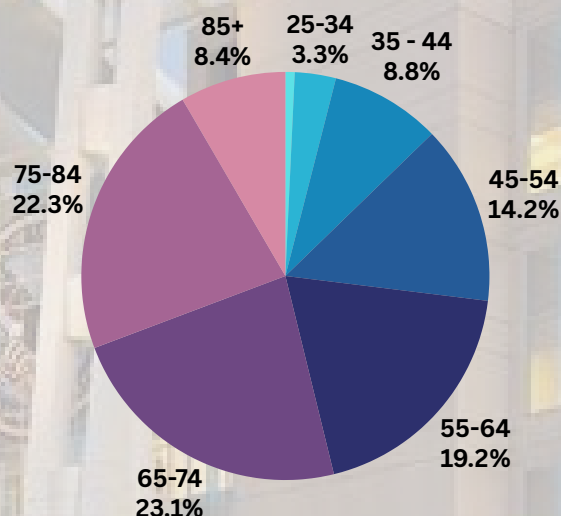
Providing Quality Care to Veterans in Central Florida

OVAHCS is a top VA health care system in the nation, with 5,482 medical professionals and support staff committed to delivering exceptional care to Veterans in Central Florida. With 11 facilities in operation, including a medical center in Lake Nona, Orlando, Florida, two Domiciliaries, a community living center, and nine clinics spread across Orange, Osceola, Brevard, Lake, Seminole, and Volusia counties, we strive to serve Veterans with excellent health care.

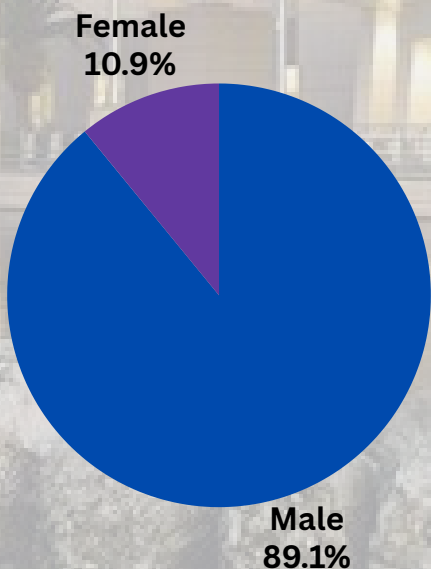
Veterans Served by Era in Service:



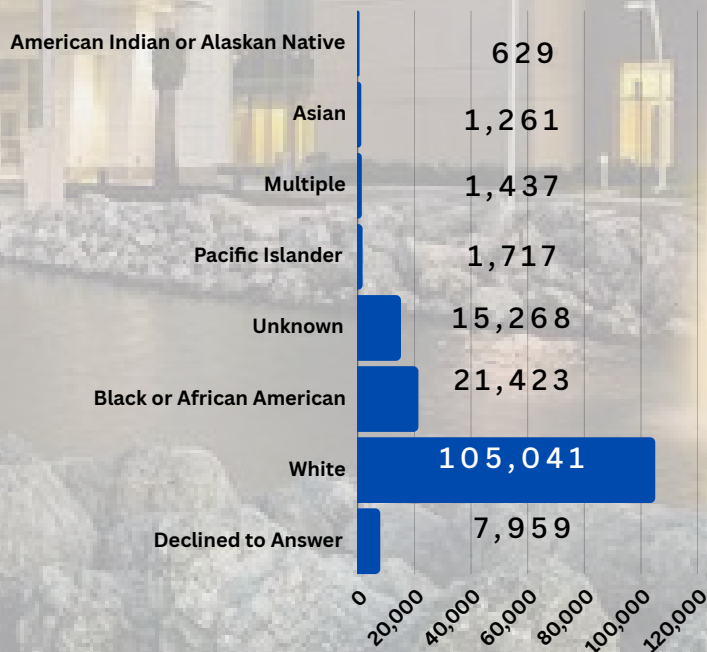
Veterans Served by Age:



GENDER



RACE



Our Sites of Care



Orlando VA Medical Center
13800 Veterans Way
Orlando, FL 32827-5812



Lake Baldwin VA Medical Center
5201 Raymond Street
Orlando, FL 32803-8208



Clermont VA Clinic
3200 Citrus Tower Boulevard
Clermont, FL 34711-7012



Deltona VA Clinic
1200 Deltona Boulevard, Suite 41-47
Deltona, FL 32725-6386



Palm Bay VA Clinic
5200 Babcock Street Northeast,
Suite 101
Palm Bay, FL 32905-4612



Kissimmee VA Clinic
701 Union Street
Kissimmee, FL 34741-5007



Our Sites of Care



Port Orange VA Clinic
3731 South Clyde Morris Boulevard
Port Orange, FL 32129-2319



Tavares VA Clinic
1390 East Burleigh Boulevard
Tavares, FL 32778-4305



**William V. Chappell Jr.
Veterans' Outpatient Clinic**
551 National Health Care Drive
Daytona Beach, FL 32114-1495



Viera VA Clinic
2900 Veterans Way
Viera, FL 32940-8007



Westside Pavilion VA Clinic
1821 Business Park Boulevard
Daytona Beach, FL 32114-1230

Constructing the Future



Emergency Department Enhancements

Phase 1 is 70% completed. The second phase of the project is tentatively scheduled to begin in Spring 2024.



Current construction on the new Emergency Department check-in area.



New Lake Nona Research Space Coming in 2024!

The project added a second floor to the existing SimLEARN building in Lake Nona, which will provide an additional 22,500 square feet of space. The new space will accommodate outpatient clinical trials conducted and other data science projects.



Current construction on the new Emergency Department waiting area.

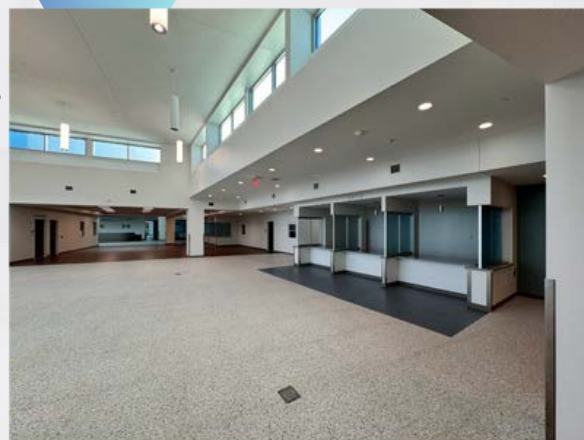
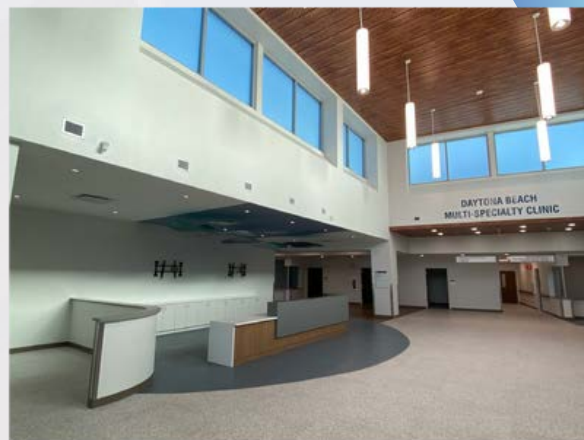
Coming May 2024!

New Daytona Beach Multispecialty Outpatient Clinic

- The Daytona Beach Multispecialty Outpatient Clinic is replacing the former, undersized William V. Chappell campus.
- The new clinic will increase our capabilities and footprint from 64,149 net usable square footage with 363 parking spaces to 128,899 net usable square footage (133,537 square-foot campus overall), with 750 parking spaces.

Departments and Services offered at the new location:

- Audiology Clinic
- Canteen Services
- Social Work Service
- Dental Clinic
- Engineering Services
- Environmental Care Services
- Eye Clinic
- Home Based Primary Care
- Health Administration Services
- HTM Engineering
- Laboratory Services
- Mental Health
- 15 Specialty Services
- Office of Information Technology
- Pharmacy Services
- Physical Therapy Services
- Police Service
- Primary Care
- Prosthetics Services
- Radiology Services
- Sterile Processing Services
- Supply Chain Management
- Voluntary Services
- Homeless Program Services



Located at: 1776 N. Williamson Blvd,
Daytona Beach, FL 32117

About our Workforce

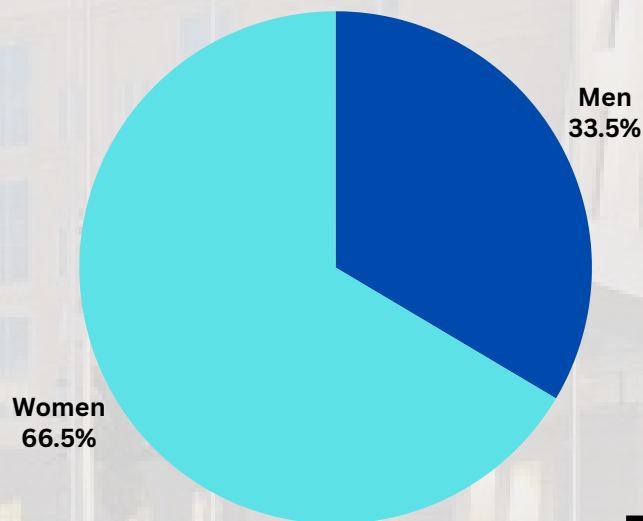


Navy Veteran Ronald Marino seen during a primary care check-up with Dr. Ali Anwar.

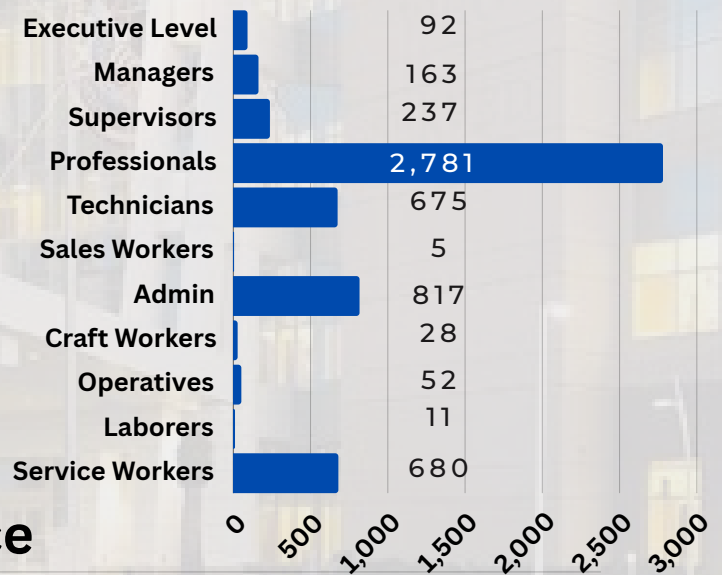


Staff attend an outreach event to celebrate PRIDE in February 2023.

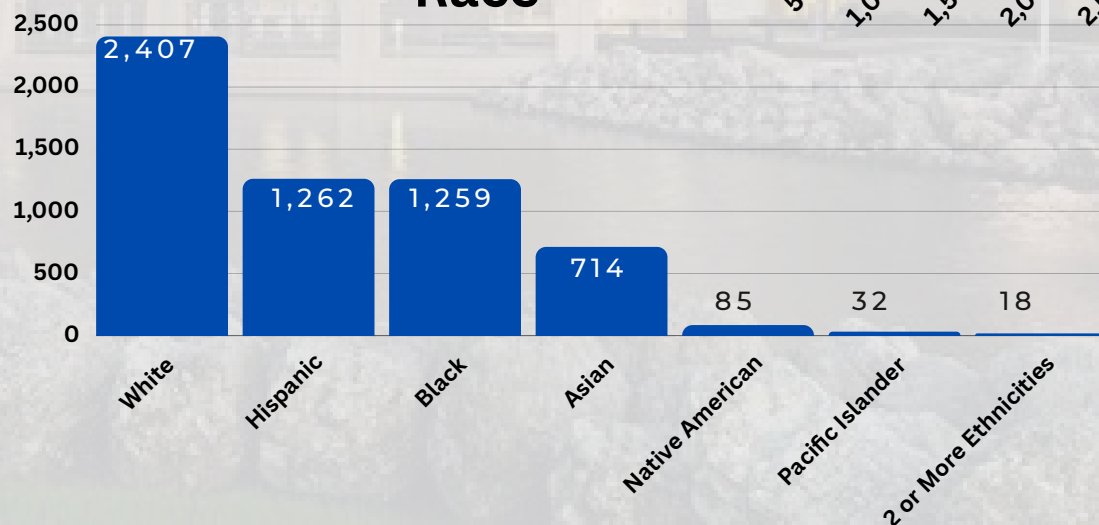
Gender



By Occupation



Race



Education Service

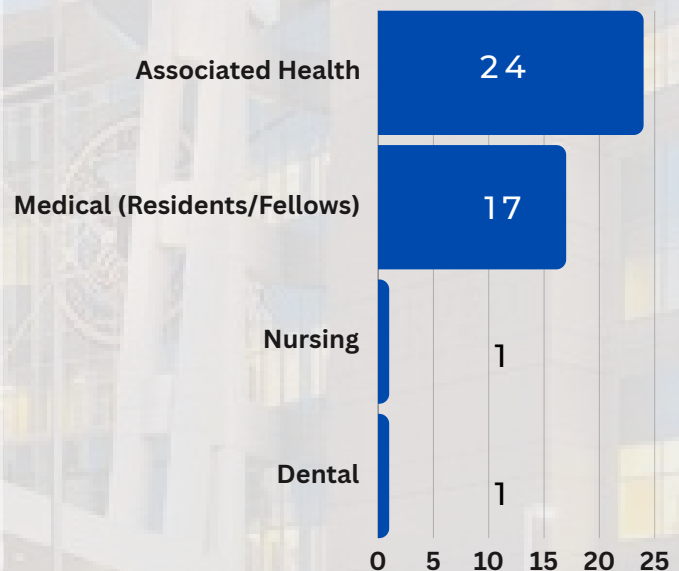
The VA is the largest provider of health professions education and training and is the second largest funder of graduate medical education in the United States, offering clinical placements and fellowships to health professions trainees (HPT) in over 40 professions.

Over 1,800 individual health professions schools and colleges have affiliation agreements with the VA. Around 120,000 HPTs rotate through VA annually, and the OVAHCS is proud to be one.

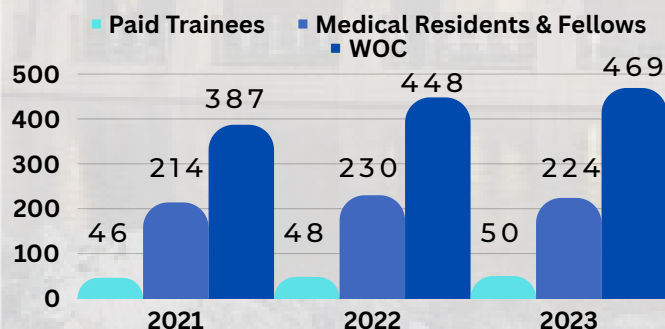
VA Sponsored Programs and their Accrediting Bodies

- **Pharmacy**
American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHSP)
- **Orthotics/Prosthetics**
National Commission on Orthotic and Prosthetic Education (NCOPE)
- **Optometry**
Accreditation Council on Optometric Education (ACOE)
- **Psychology**
American Psychological Association (APA)
- **Podiatry**
Council on Podiatric Medical Education (CPME)
- **Dental**
Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA)

HPE Training Programs



Health Professions Trainees - Growth



New Training Programs

- UCF/HCA- Hospice and Palliative Care Fellowship
- Surgical Technician Program
- Chaplain Service Clinical Pastoral Education Program
- OVAHCS-Minimally Invasive Gynecological Surgical Fellowship
- Mental Health Nurse Practitioner Residency

Academic Affiliations

- Medical / Dental -14
- Associated Health -178

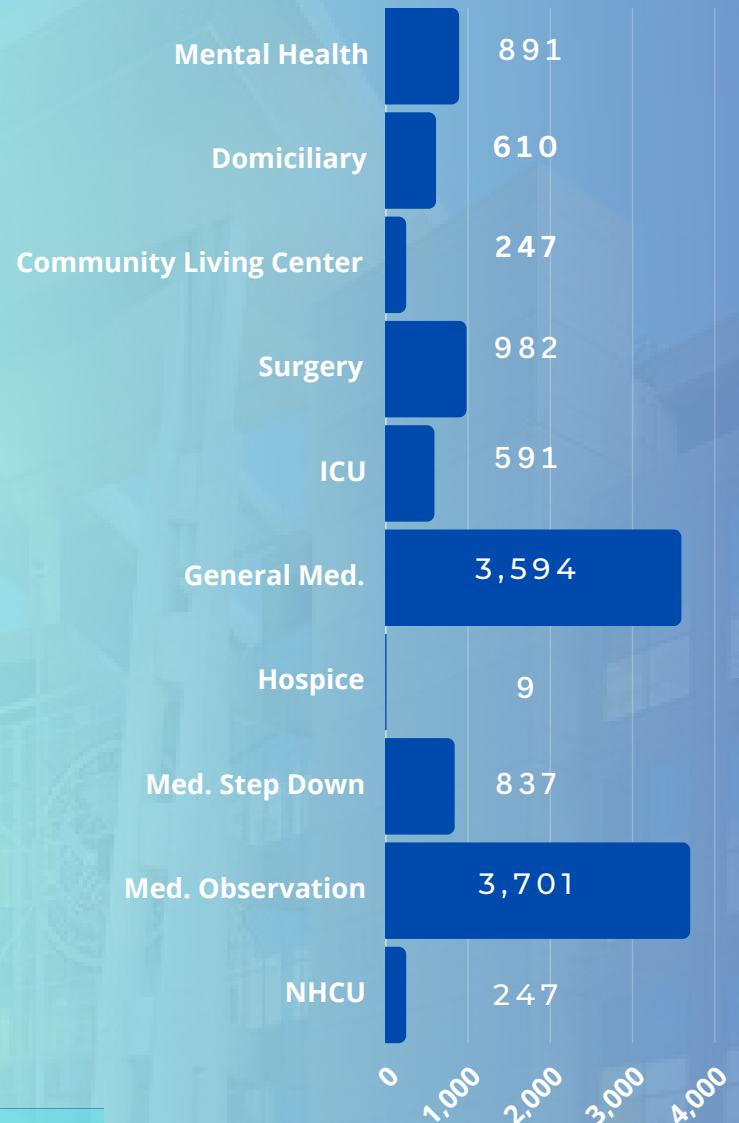
Operational Overview & Workload



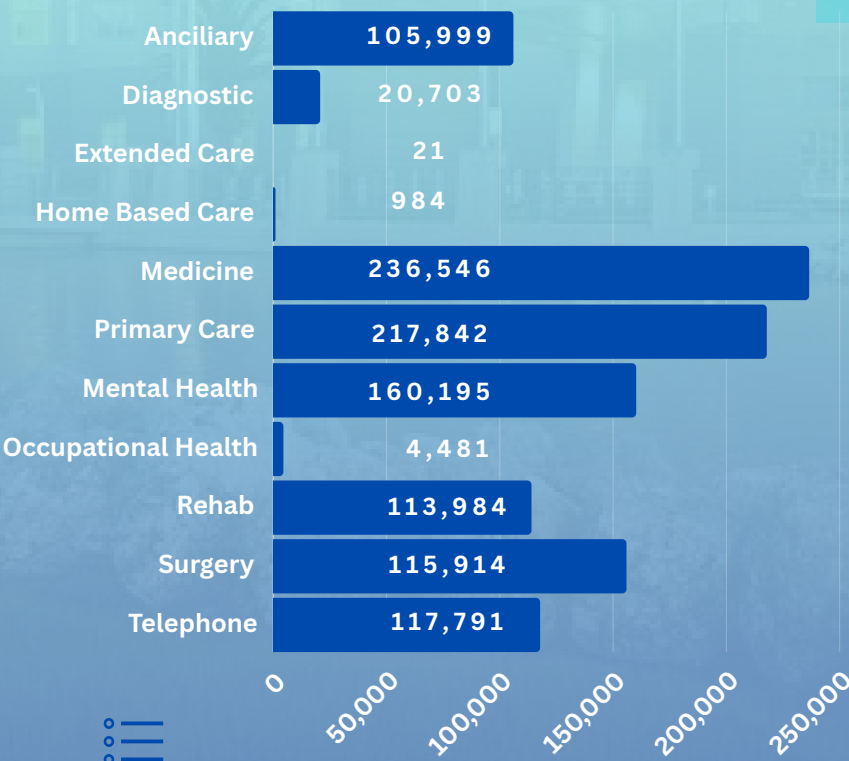
Pictured in photo: Cardiology staff performed their first left-sided cardiac arrhythmia ablation procedure on September 26, 2023. Used to treat atrial fibrillation and other heart rhythm disturbances, the procedure has helped to significantly decrease the overall cost of performing the surgery and has minimized the amount of fragmented health care for the Veteran. To date, there are only six other VAs in the Nation who perform this surgery.

Total Operating Beds - 134
Internal Medicine - 59
Psychiatry - 40
Surgery - 35

Total Admissions

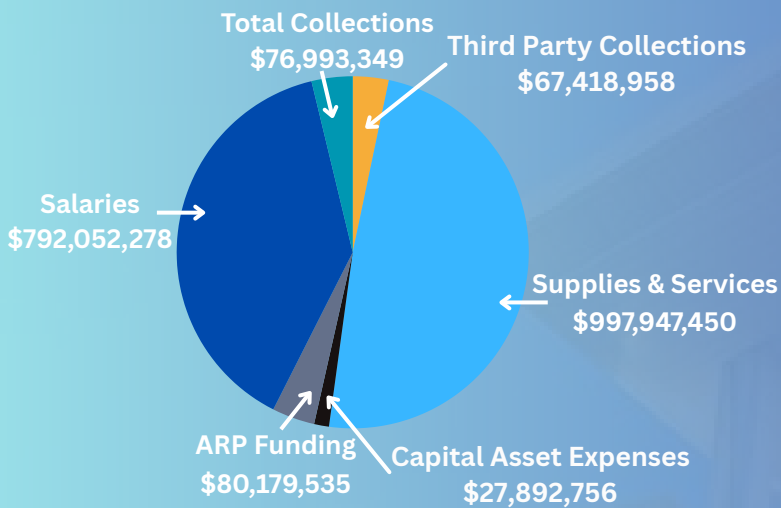


FY 23 Completed Appointments

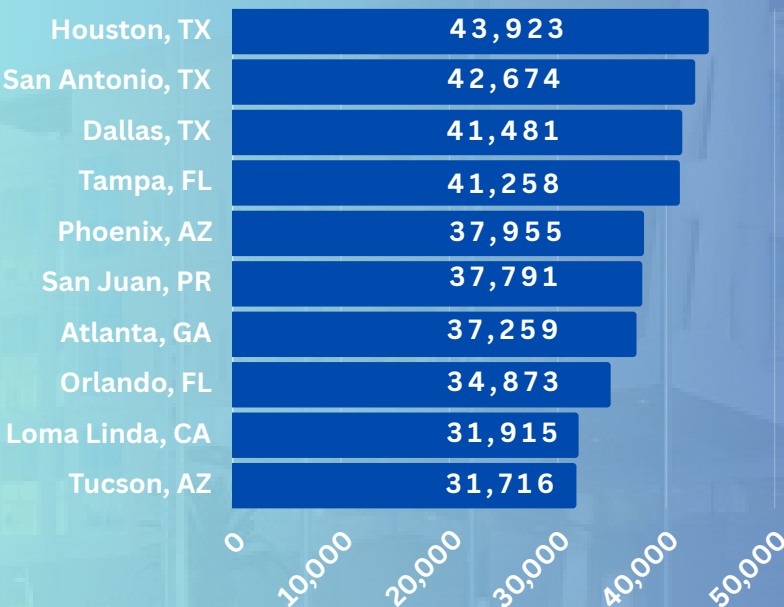


The Honorable VA Secretary Dennis McDonough paid a visit to the Orlando VA Medical Center in Lake Nona on Thursday, March 9, 2023 to commend Veterans and staff for their exceptional work in providing advocacy and healthcare services to Veterans. During his visit, he took the time to greet everyone and handed out his official challenge coin as a special token of appreciation.

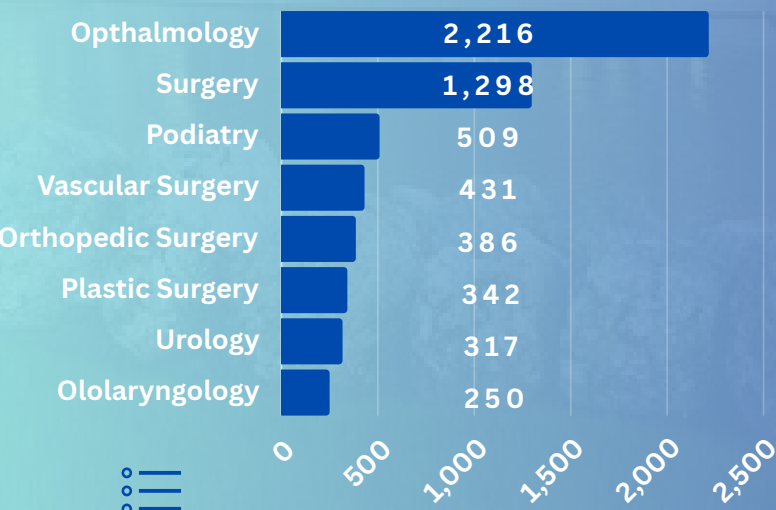
Budget Breakdown



Top ED Volume for 1A-High Complexity Facilities



FY23 Completed Surgeries



Programmatic Stats

- 267,992 VA Video Connect (VVC) encounters were completed by OVAHCS in FY23 with 52,459 of our Veterans utilizing VVC for their healthcare. This represents 42.27% of all of our Veterans, an increase from 40.76% of Veterans in FY22. This level of engagement demonstrates the enduring popularity of telehealth as a convenient way to access care, despite no longer being needed as a contingency for COVID-19. Furthermore, the percentage of our Veterans with a VVC encounter in FY23 is more than 10% above the national rate of 30.22%, demonstrating that Orlando is a leader in the use of virtual care.
- The Orlando VA continues to be a site for the Precision Oncology Program for Cancer of the Prostate (POPCaP) Network. This program seeks to use precision medicine to tailor individualized treatments for Veterans with prostate cancer. Dr. Priya Gopalan is the Orlando VA Lead Site Investigator.



The Orlando VA has become the first of 25 approved locations to receive a Homeless Program Mobile Medical Unit, which will provide much-needed medical care to homeless Veterans in need.

On our Way to Becoming a High-Reliability Organization

The OVAHCS embarked on a transformative journey, aiming to become a high-reliability organization in January 2020. Since then, rigorous safety protocols and continuous training have been implemented to help foster a culture of prioritizing patient safety and minimizing medical errors.

The Executive Leadership Team has played a critical role in promoting open communication and empowering staff to voice their concerns without fear of reprisal. Additionally, utilizing advanced technologies like the new technology being used in dental service (see example in photo caption) and data-driven approaches, the organization has enhanced clinical processes, reduced risk, and has made improvements across the entire healthcare system.



The Dental lab at the Orlando VA Medical Center recently remodeled the clinic to accommodate more space for 3-D printers, milling machines, and lab scanners. In addition, Dental Service included updated chairside scanners. The benefits of adding the new equipment and advancements in technology will provide better quality service to Veterans.



High reliability is not a new concept to the Veterans Health Administration, nor should it be viewed as an additional task. Many of our daily work practices are already in alignment with HRO Principles. However, we can always improve.

The HRO Vision

The “True North” of an HRO is Zero Harm. Zero Harm bridges the gap between “to err is human” and the Hippocratic oath to “First, do no harm.” Becoming an HRO will create a physically and psychologically safe environment for Veterans, caregivers, beneficiaries and the VHA workforce.

HRO’s Goal

High reliability principles and practices are incorporated into processes and systems used to perform the work of the OVAHCS and within the behaviors of the people who make the work happen.

HR 
IN PRACTICE

“—
Our staff’s dedication to ensuring the safety, health, and well-being of Veterans is unwavering,” said OVAHCS Director/CEO, Timothy J. Cooke. “The Veteran is at the center of everything we do, and this is evident in the resilience and commitment of our workforce.”



A Year of Progress: Promoting the PACT Act for Veterans' Health

OVAHCS has dedicated this past year to promoting and implementing the PACT Act, making a significant leap forward in recognizing and addressing the unique challenges Veterans face due to toxic exposure. The law was designed to comprehensively address the impact of toxic substances on Veterans' health and has been a rallying point for advocacy groups, healthcare professionals, and policymakers.

Over the last year, the OVAHCS has held a total of five PACT Act events across Central Florida. The PACT Act events have been a huge success among Veterans due to their one-stop shop approach and have assisted with the healthcare system's ability to screen over 90,000 Veterans during fiscal year 2023. This has made the OVAHCS 3rd in the Nation in terms of most toxic exposure screens conducted nationally.

The past year's progress highlights a paradigm shift in how the nation addresses the long-standing issue of toxic exposure for Veterans. For the OVAHCS, the PACT Act has become a symbol of commitment, a pact not only signed on paper but lived out through tangible actions that prioritize the well-being of those who sacrificed for the greater good. As we reflect on this transformative year, it's evident that the journey toward comprehensive care for Veterans affected by toxic exposures is a collective endeavor, uniting communities, healthcare providers, and policymakers in a shared commitment to the health and dignity of all who served.

**90,160 Veterans
screened in fiscal
year 2023!**

**Of the Veterans
screened, 41,813
reported at least
one exposure which
is 46%.**

**OVAHCS ranks #3 in
the Nation in the
number
of toxic exposure
screens conducted.**



Live Whole Health.

WELLNESS IN 2023

The Whole Health System approach is informed by all appropriate research and makes use of all appropriate therapeutic concepts and disciplines to achieve optimal health and healing.

Whole Health includes pathway (orientation, taking charge of my life and health (TCMLH), Veteran partners and/or peer support), wellbeing (health & wellness coaching, mind body medicine skills, yoga, tai chi, qi gong, meditation, guided imagery) & CIH (integrated wellness team, chiropractic, acupuncture, virtual reality, recreation therapy, and adaptive sports).

FY23 saw growth and innovation through celebrating the completion of a VHA Shark Tank project aimed at reducing employee stress and burnout through the implementation of Employee Wellbeing Centers and carts.

Additionally, health & wellness coaches continue to provide outstanding support to Veterans in Primary Care, while adding services, like a green belt project in the Orlando VA Medical Center Nursing Float Pool that targets hospital readmissions and coaching utilization.

20+ Outreach Events

- PACT Act Events
- Women Veterans Tea Party
- TBI Event: Lie Down or Stand Up, Lake Eola
- Renew Open House
- Caregiver Retreats
- International Overdose Awareness Day
- Armor Event-Suicide Prevention Resource Fair
- Medical Foster Home Caregiver Training Day
- Spartan Races
- Sports4Vets Throwdown
- Creative Arts Festival
- Maternal Health Summit
- Lake Nona Community Resource Fair
- Come Out With Pride Events
- VA Enrollment & Health Fair
- National Caregiver Month Drive Thru Event
- VISN 8 LGBTQ+ VCC Summit
- Great American Smoke Out
- Paralyzed Veterans of America Conference
- PVA Women Veterans Retreat
- Employee Whole Health Breaks



Impact Snapshot

163,830

Number of Veteran Whole Health encounters throughout OVAHCS

56,159

Number of Veterans engaged in Whole Health throughout OVAHCS

49.44%

Percentage of OVAHCS population accessing Whole Health in FY23



Pour painting ushers new energy among domiciliary Veterans

For License Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) Larry D. Johns, working with Veterans is personal. As a Retired United States Marine Corps (USMC) Veteran now a LCSW at the OVAHCS Domiciliary, Johns finds pour painting relaxing and calming.

“Pour painting is an art form that uses an acrylic paint mixture that is fluid, which you pour over a canvas using various paint-pouring techniques,” said Johns.

“I knew Veterans could benefit from this and when I approached my leadership team, they supported the idea, and I ran with it,” Johns explained.

Johns now provides this amazing therapy session and it shows in the Veteran’s growth within their individual program.

“I do abstract art and pour painting because I believe it will help Veterans relax and pick up a skill that they could use to help them deal with the stressors of life,” said Johns.

During the art therapy sessions, Domiciliary residents can express their emotions through pour painting. Helping to cope and heal depression, anxiety, and trauma.



Pictured in photo: Navy Veteran, Michelle Rodriguez

Sessions are offered twice a month for an hour. During these sessions, the step-by-step process of pour painting is demonstrated. Residents then pick and choose paint colors, and with their own motions can begin to create a beautiful unique canvas that they can take with them as a reminder of the creativity they have and the calmness these exercises can provide.

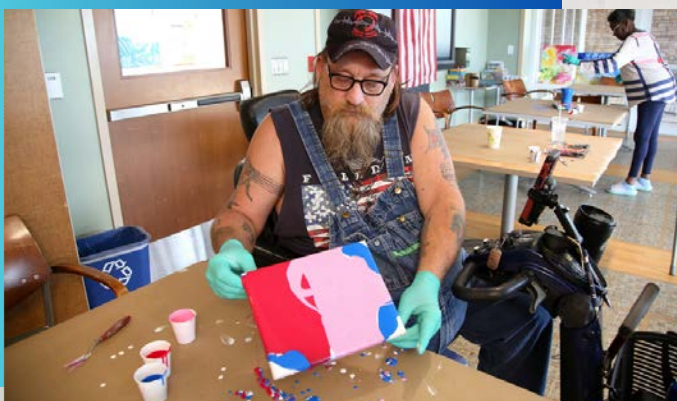
“Trust the process and give it a try,” said Army Veteran, Charles Fogleman.

Navy Veteran, Michelle Rodriguez learned to let go of what she could not control during the paint-pouring session.

“Learning to let go and be creative is something to be proud of,” she said.

The smiles on Veterans’ faces are what keep Johns motivated to continue to offer the classes each week.

“To see them come in grouchy and not sure if they really want to do this, to thanking me at the end, and then ready to sign up for the next group, gives me great joy,” Johns said.



Pictured in photo: Army Veteran, Charles Fogleman

Introducing the RENEW Program: A Health Initiative for Women Veterans in Central Florida

The Women's Health Program at the Orlando VA Healthcare System (OVAHCS) launched a new program in the spring tailored to meet the needs of Women Veterans aged 50 and over.

RENEW (Restoration, Exercise, Nutrition, Engagement and Wellness) was conceptualized and created after feedback from women Veterans focus groups. OVAHCS learned that Women Veterans in the 50 and over age demographic may feel disconnected from available services from time to time and find it somewhat challenging to navigate the VA system.

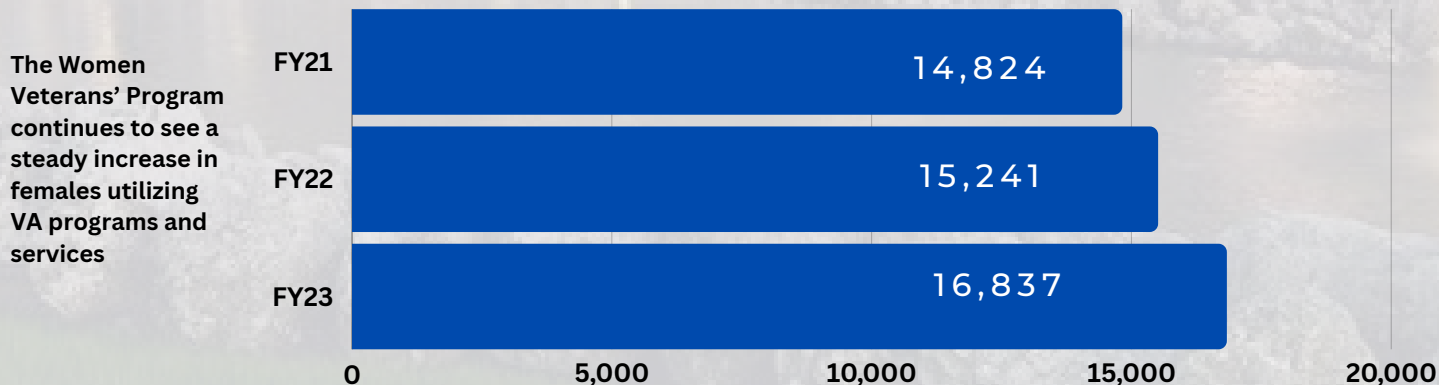


Carol Beecher-Blair, Marine Corps Veteran, RENEW Program Participant and Breast Cancer survivor sits and discusses RENEW offerings with Lisa Martel, OVAHCS Women Veterans Program Manager

The RENEW program is a multi-disciplinary initiative designed to offer assessment and referral services that cater to the specific requirements of our older adult Women Veterans (ages 50+), who constitute the largest and fastest-growing population in Orlando. It is equipped to provide targeted and practical assistance to Women Veterans experiencing biopsychosocial stressors, including mental health needs, GYN concerns, quality of life, and health concerns.

"Since the RENEW Open House was held in April, we have accepted 56 new referrals to the RENEW program and are expecting to double this figure in FY24," said OVAHCS Women Veterans Program Manager, Lisa Martel. "We have been working to provide Veteran education extensively, and our program has been recognized as a best practice by VISN 8."

The RENEW Orientation class meets both in-person and virtually on the 3rd Tuesday of every month from 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. To participate in RENEW, ask your provider to enter a RENEW consult to get started in the Orientation Group class. For more information, please contact the Women Veterans Program office at 407-631-4088.



Maternal Health Summit advances Maternal & Reproductive Care for Veterans & their families

The Perinatal Reproductive Educational Planning and Resources (PREPARE) program recently held its inaugural VA Maternal Health Summit in Orlando. The event was organized by Melissa Tran, an OVAHCS marriage and family therapist, military sexual trauma coordinator, and senior innovation fellow of the VHA Innovation Ecosystem. Her own experiences with perinatal resources in the community inspired her to create better in-house perinatal services for Veterans. With two million Women Veterans in the US, the VA provides a wide range of reproductive health services to female Veterans, including contraception, breastfeeding and lactation support, and menopausal symptom treatment.



Pictured in photo from left to right: Maureen Elias, VA Deputy Chief of Staff; Ms. Melissa Tran, OVAHCS; and Diana Mendez, Program Manager BHIP CBOCs Orlando at the 2023 Inaugural Maternal Health Summit.

The maternal health summit brought together over 155 VA providers, executive leaders, community partners, and Veteran Service Organization representatives from 46 VA facilities across the nation to collaborate, share knowledge, and explore innovative ideas for advancing maternal and reproductive care for Veterans and their families.

During the summit, attendees participated in three panels, including "Innovation and Research," "Health Disparities and Social Determinants," and "Veteran Lived Experience." Panelists discussed future opportunities for research and innovation around mental health, whole health, reproductive care, and maternal mortality. They also explored marginalized communities, health disparities, and social determinants of health, such as safe housing, reliable transportation, and access to nutritious foods.

The event also featured a session titled "Small Talks, Big Impact," where five presenters shared compelling stories on their personal and professional experiences. Dr. John De Caro, a urologist at Charlie Norwood VA in Augusta, Georgia, presented his project, the Male Contraception Initiative.

PREPARE hopes to reduce the impact of social determinants and health disparities on the lived experiences of perinatal Veterans and their families by continuing to listen to their needs and evolving programming to match.



Pictured in photo from left to right: Ms. Suzy Shirley, Director of Community Engagement and Fellowships, VHA Innovation Ecosystem; Ms. Melissa Tran, Senior Innovation Fellow; Mr. Timothy J. Cooke, OVAHCS Director/ CEO; and Kit Teague, Executive Director, VHA Innovation Ecosystem. Melissa Tran was selected as one of seven Senior Innovation Fellows for the 2022 - 2023 cohort for her work on PREPARE.

New Technology Based Eye Care Services Launch Utilizing Mobile Medical Unit (MMU)

In June 2023, connected care launched their Technology-Based Eye Care Services Program (TECS) to assist with increasing access to eye care services for Veterans in Central Florida.

This groundbreaking approach to eye care provided via Mobile Medical Unit (MMU) provides screening availability to low-risk Veterans for cataracts, macular degeneration, glaucoma, and diabetic retinopathy. It also provides Veterans with the option to pick out new frames for spectacle prescriptions.

This remarkable technology-driven solution enables Veterans to receive high-quality eye care services with reduced wait times and improved access, ensuring their vision needs are addressed promptly and effectively.



OVAHCS staff work with Veterans to roll-out the new technology-based eye care services (TECS) program utilizing the mobile medical unit.

"We are thrilled to introduce the TECS program at the Orlando VA Healthcare System," said OVAHCS Medical Center Director, Mr. Timothy J. Cooke. "This program represents our ongoing commitment to harnessing the power of technology to enhance the quality of care we provide to our patients."

Dr. Sara Henney, Connected Care Optometrist, believes that the program will ultimately revolutionize eye care access. "This will allow us to better serve Veterans and ensure that their visual needs are met efficiently and effectively," said Henney. "It will also assist with early detection and enable Veterans to pick out new glasses from the convenience of the parked mobile medical unit."

The TECS program is currently being piloted at the Lake Baldwin, Clermont, and Kissimmee VA clinics, with phased expansion planned throughout FY24.



A ribbon cutting ceremony was hosted on June 21, 2023 at the Lake Baldwin VA Clinic for the TECS MMU and was deployed for enrolled Veterans in Central Florida.

TeleCritical Care Program: Advancing Healthcare Through Innovation

The TeleCC program offers remote video assessments, in which TeleCC providers or RNs enter an ICU room virtually.

During the assessment, the remote provider or RN appears on a dedicated room monitor visible to both the local staff and the hospitalized Veteran. Once the assessment is complete, the camera turns away from the Veteran, and the image of the remote provider disappears from the monitor. The camera's movement and position indicate when video monitoring is taking place to ensure that the Veteran and local staff are aware.

Launched in March 2023, the TeleCritical Care (TeleCC) program is an innovative telehealth initiative that employs virtual technologies and clinical information systems to provide remote support to intensive care unit (ICU) patients. This program was designed to improve the quality of care by supplementing standard care with an additional layer of monitoring, as well as increasing access to intensive care expertise and consultation.

Enhanced Patient Care

Since its inception, the TeleCC program has shown remarkable progress in enhancing patient care. The program has provided enhanced patient monitoring, which has been extended to our stepdown and medical-level Veterans occupying ICU beds. It has also fostered a collaborative environment.

Once Veterans and family members receive the necessary education, we receive positive feedback, highlighting the comfort and security they feel knowing that dedicated specialists are just a click away. The program is a significant step forward in OVAHCS' commitment to providing exceptional care to Veterans. This program is sure to bring about even more positive outcomes in the future.



Staff celebrate a ribbon cutting ceremony in the ICU at the Orlando VA Medical Center in Lake Nona. The TeleCC program has expanded to Veterans receiving care in our stepdown and medical level units.

Wayfinding Made Easier!

VA INTRODUCING THE NEW ORLANDO VA MOBILE APP NAVIGATE TO A HEALTHIER YOU



Helpful information pre-visit can be easily accessed right from your phone!

- Navigate to saved locations around the medical center.
- Get directions to the facility and to clinics and amenities within the hospital.
- Helps patients stay informed by providing the latest announcements about the hospital.
- Submit beneficiary travel claims.
- Add and track upcoming appointments.
- Check-in to your appointments through virtual check-in.
- And more!

iPhone users can download the app by scanning the QR code here:



Android users can download the app by scanning the QR code here:



Empowering Caregivers



OVAHCS recognizes the critical role that family members and friends play in Veteran care. Our mission is to promote the health and well-being of caregivers throughout the VA system through education, resources, support, and services.

The OVAHCS Caregiver Support Program (CSP) focuses on improving the quality of life of caregivers by providing respect and service excellence through a wide range of support services, education, and tools that empower caregivers to care for themselves and their Veteran. The ultimate goal is to help Veterans live to their fullest potential at home.

The OVAHCS Caregiver Support Program accomplishes this by helping caregivers navigate the VA healthcare system and access needed resources at VA and in the community.

This past year the program served more than 1,800 enrolled caregivers in both programs. In addition to one-on-one support, they provided support groups, classes, and special events in both English and Spanish.

Topics included caregiving techniques, healthy relationships, suicide prevention, self-care, managing stress, resilience, disease specific education, mindfulness, nutrition and more. Caregivers were offered activities to improve connection with others such as half day retreats, walking groups and tea parties.



More than 400 caregivers participated in classes, groups and events provided virtually and in person throughout the six-county area.

A critical VHA support is the toll-free Caregiver Support Line (1-855-260-3274) which operates Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. ET, and Saturday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. ET. It provides valuable information and referrals for caregivers and connects them with local resources.

The OVAHCS has the 2nd largest Caregiver Support Program in the nation!



Orlando VA and Community Partners Bridging the gap to End Veteran Suicide

The At Risk Monitoring and OutReach (ARMOR) Program, aligned with VA's Suicide Prevention strategies and recognized as a strong practice by VA's Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention provides a comprehensive continuum of mental health care and suicide prevention services to end Veteran suicides.

The ARMOR's comprehensive approach to identifying Veterans at increased risk of suicide begins with supporting staff across the organization to evaluate risk levels, to coordinating care with community facilities, and following through with identifying treatment needs and on-going care coordination when a Veteran has been discharged from an inpatient setting.

ARMOR oversees multiple programs, some of which are also newly developed. The teams include Suicide Prevention, REACH Vet, SPEAR, Guardian, ACHIEVE and Community Engagement and Partnerships Coordinator (CEPC).



Vivian Figueroa, LCSW – Suicide Prevention Osceola Community Partnerships



Elizabeth Jackson, LCSW – Suicide Prevention and the Arts Community

Community Engagement and Partnerships Coordinators (CEPC) is the newest team with the ARMOR Program. CEPC's and Suicide Prevention teams work together to fully implement the public health approach combining community and clinical interventions to reach all Veterans. The CEPC is a national program that focuses on building coalitions with community partners targeting one of the three priority areas:

Identify service members, Veterans, and their families and screen for suicide risk

- Strengthen access and delivery of suicide care
- Identify and support people at risk

Promote connected and improve care transitions

- Teach coping and problem-solving skills
- Lessen harms and prevent future risk

Increase lethal means safety and safety planning

- Create protective environments



Improving the Veteran Experience

In FY2023, there were **43,913** VSignals surveys returned by Veterans regarding their outpatient care at the Orlando VA Healthcare System (OVAHCS). Of those surveyed, **90.7%** trust OVAHCS for their healthcare needs, and **94.6%** responded they felt respected and comfortable during their most recent VA healthcare experience.

The Patient Advocacy Program managed **10,947** requests from Veterans, family members, and other visitors who contacted the Patient Advocate Office in FY2023. Our goal is to resolve requests and concerns within seven business days by using the Patient Advocate Tracking System (PATs) software. PATs is a web-based tool empowering VA employees to manage and track Veterans' needs. In FY2023, the average amount of days to resolve a Veteran's concern was **5.5 days**.

What Veterans are Saying About Us!

Everyone and I mean Everyone, was kind, considerate, and respectful. It made me feel like I was being seen by the best of the best. Thank You So Much to all the members of the VA.

As a retired medical professional and Vietnam Veteran, I can't say enough about the care I am receiving from the VA. I am so thankful for all they do for me.

All my service from VA has been above and beyond. I have been repaid a thousand times over. The public sector should take lessons. Every contact I've had with VA facilities has made me feel like a VIP.

I just wanted to take a moment to say thank you! The Viera VA clinic is top notch. The staff, the atmosphere and the facilities are excellent and amazing. I am forever grateful for all the support I receive. Thank you from the bottom of my heart!!!

The Orlando VA Medical Center is top-notch and should be a model for all VA hospitals throughout the country. Excellent services and professionals throughout.

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

Dr. Minh Ho, Acting Chief of Infectious Disease and Epidemiologist has been named a 2024 VHA Innovation Ecosystem Entrepreneur in Residence Fellow. Fellows receive resources from the Innovation Ecosystem to further develop or expand their projects that improve Veteran health care and VA employees' experience over the course of a year. He will be partnering with another Fellow, Elizabeth Dinges, PharmD, to spread harm reduction supplies and services to more VA facilities while ensuring Veterans who use drugs are incorporated into VA care models and decisions.



Selected as a 2024 Catalyst Fellow for MIT LinQ, Michelle Petrovic, M.D. is Director and Chief of Medical Simulation. She also serves as an attending anesthesiologist. Aside from her role at the OVAHCS, Dr. Petrovic is a Professor of Anesthesiology at the University of Central Florida College of Medicine. Dr. Petrovic attended Harvard for college and the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine for medical school. She completed a residency in Anesthesiology and Critical Care Medicine at Johns Hopkins Hospital where she subsequently served on faculty for 10 years, leading initiatives in facility patient safety as informed by multidisciplinary and inter-professional collaboration initiatives. Her selection as a fellow is due to her recent development of national and international communication models that were implemented at prestigious academic hospitals across the nation as well as internationally in the healthcare system in South Africa. Dr. Petrovic serves as a Dean Leader at the VHA National Center for Patient Safety, where she mentors chief residents and fellows in patient safety and quality improvement.



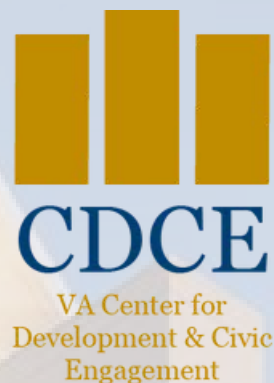
Mr. Edward Reyes was recently acknowledged by TechNation for his contributions to biomedical engineering. TechNation recognized a total of 40 HTM professionals from across the United States for their exceptional achievements, earned merits, and positive influence in the Biomedical Engineering/ Healthcare Technology Management industry. The nominations were based on their contributions to their employers, local society chapters, Biomed symposiums, and trade shows.



Dr Fady Baddoura, Dr Beniah (Ben) Nwankwo, and Dr Jonathan Vasquez recently received recognition for their best practice of sorting methodology within pathology and laboratory service. The team will present their best practice nationally and will spearhead to diffuse their practice to other VHA sites of care across the country.

*Pictured in photo from left to right:
Dr Fady Baddoura, Dr Beniah (Ben)
Nwankwo and Dr Jonathan Vasquez.*

Center for Development & Civic Engagement



Our organization is grateful for the contributions of our generous donors, community partners, and volunteers. In total, we received monetary donations and non-monetary donations.

Our volunteers, consisting of both scheduled and occasional members, provided over 54,081 hours of service. We are proud to have such a diverse group of volunteers who come from all walks of life and represent various ethnic and cultural backgrounds, age groups, and physical abilities.

Our volunteer drivers alone traveled over 68,004 miles to serve 1,740 Veterans. We introduced a new program called Soldiers' Angels Lyft, which provided 626 rides to Veterans and helped avoid 555 missed appointments.

We also want to express our appreciation for our 94 junior volunteers who gave a total of 6,355.75 hours of service over the summer. Their dedication and support were invaluable to us.



Carnival Cruise Line salutes Veterans aboard their Mardi Gras ship. Tracy Skala, Deputy Medical Center Director/DCEO accepted the keys to a 15-passenger van donated by Carnival to aid in Veteran transportation to and from appointments.

The Don Soderblom and Sanford Elks Lodge 1241 made a significant donation to innovation projects that directly impact Veterans. Items were provided for Homebased Primary Care (HBPC), Military Sexual Trauma program, Whole Health, DOM, HUDVASH, and the CDCE Clothing Closet.



Soldiers Angels Volunteers assist with monthly food pantry operations at the Lake Baldwin VA Clinic.



Choose VA

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United States Department of Veterans Affairs
Produced by the OVAHCS Office of Public Affairs**

**For questions about this publication please email:
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